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ABSTRACT

Differences in age and developmental levels may result in changes in the ways males and females value themselves, and in the level of perceptual functioning from observers. Subjects (N=725) were divided into three groups. Self-raters (N=519) ranged from 6 to 18 years of age. Peer-raters (N=129) were their contemporaries (within one year). There were 77 adult-raters. Subjects were evenly divided by sex at each age level and within each group. All subjects completed a semantic-differential inventory, either a self-report or a same-item observer report. In all cases, self-reporting males had higher self-scores than females, the difference being more pronounced with older subjects. Peers and most of the adults saw self-reporters at a lower level than did the subjects themselves. Male adults showed lower ratings of female subjects than did female adults. Female adults showed lower perceptions of male subjects than they did of female subjects. Both male and female peers rated males higher than females. Males continue to rate themselves at a higher level than do females throughout the developmental stages. (Author/NRB)

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The Gender Differential in Interpersonal Perceptions

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Hartford, Conecticut, April, 1980.

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The Gender Differential in Interpersonal Perceptions

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Problem

The study was undertaken to determine whether changes had occurred in the ways that males and females value themselves (Turner, 1968) and in the level of perceptual functioning from observers, especially in terms of their own sex (Rosenberg, 1965). It was also deemed essential to note developmental differences as these interact with possible gender differences (McKeachie, 1976).

Methods

There were 725 subjects from a metropolitan area in New England--519 self-raters, 129 peer-raters, and 77 adult-raters. The self-raters ranged in age from six to eighteen; their peers were contemporaries within one year of their own ages. There was a fairly even division of the sexes at each age-level and within each group.

A semantic-differential inventory was administered to all subjects; some provided self-reports, and the others responded with same-item observer-reports. The analytical design of the data included analysis of variance, Duncan's multiple comparisons test and Sandler's A statistic. Discriminant analysis was also utilized.

Results

In all cases, as noted in Table 1 and conceptualized further in Figures 1, 2, and 3, the self-rating males had higher self-scores than did the females, regardless of age; the differences between the sexes were more pronounced with the older subjects. In general, peers saw their age-mates at a lower level

than did the subjects themselves. Most of the adults' perceptions were also below the self-ratings, but the variability in their scores was greater. Male adults showed lower ratings of female subjects than did female adults. Female adults demonstrated lower perceptions of male subjects than they did of female subjects. No such pattern was yielded when comparing male peers with female peers rating male or female subjects. However, both male and female peers rated male subjects higher than they did female subjects. Discriminant analysis results indicated a clear differentiation of group and role (Tables 2 and 3).

Implications

Males continue to rate themselves at a higher level than do females throughout the developmental stages. Others also tend to view males at a higher level than they do the females--regardless of whether these others are peers or adults. This result would seem to relate to the sex that has control over the allocation of resources or rewards, as well as the sex that is perceived as having such control. In both cases, of course, the males are seen as in control. Since stereotyped models are abundantly available, males at varying stages of development, as well as their female counterparts, can be expected to continue the pattern.

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Table 1

Summary Data of Self-Ratings

and

Interpersonal Perceptions

(T-Scores)

Age Groups	Self-Raters Female	Peer-Raters F	Peer-Raters M	Adult-Raters F	Adult-Raters M	Self-Raters Male	Peer-Raters F	Peer-Raters M	Adult-Raters F	Adult-Raters M
6-9	51	48	49	48	46	53	51	51	47	49
10-14	56	52	51	53	50	59	54	55	52	55
15-18	59	54	54	52	49	68	59	57	58	63

Table 2

Discriminant Analysis of Gender Function

Eigenvalue	Relative Percentage	Canonical Correlation	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-Square
.16242	100.00	.374	.8603	85.710***

$p < .001$

Table 3

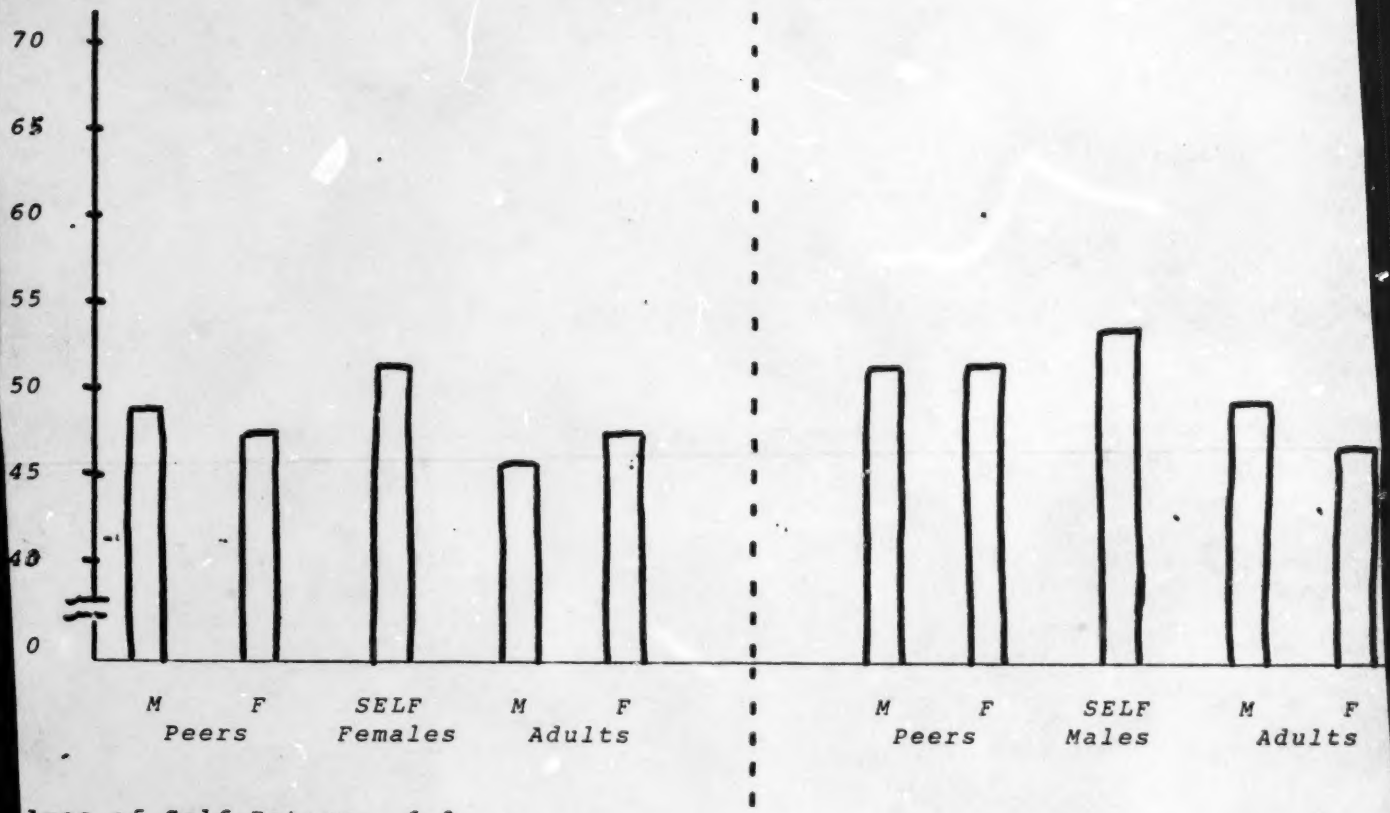
Classification of Group Membership

Group	Number of Cases	Predicted Group Membership Males	Females	Group Centroids on Gender Function
Males	261	86.8%	13.2%	-.368
Females	258	17.6%	82.4%	+.379

Percent of grouped cases correctly classified: 84.6%

*Figure 1**

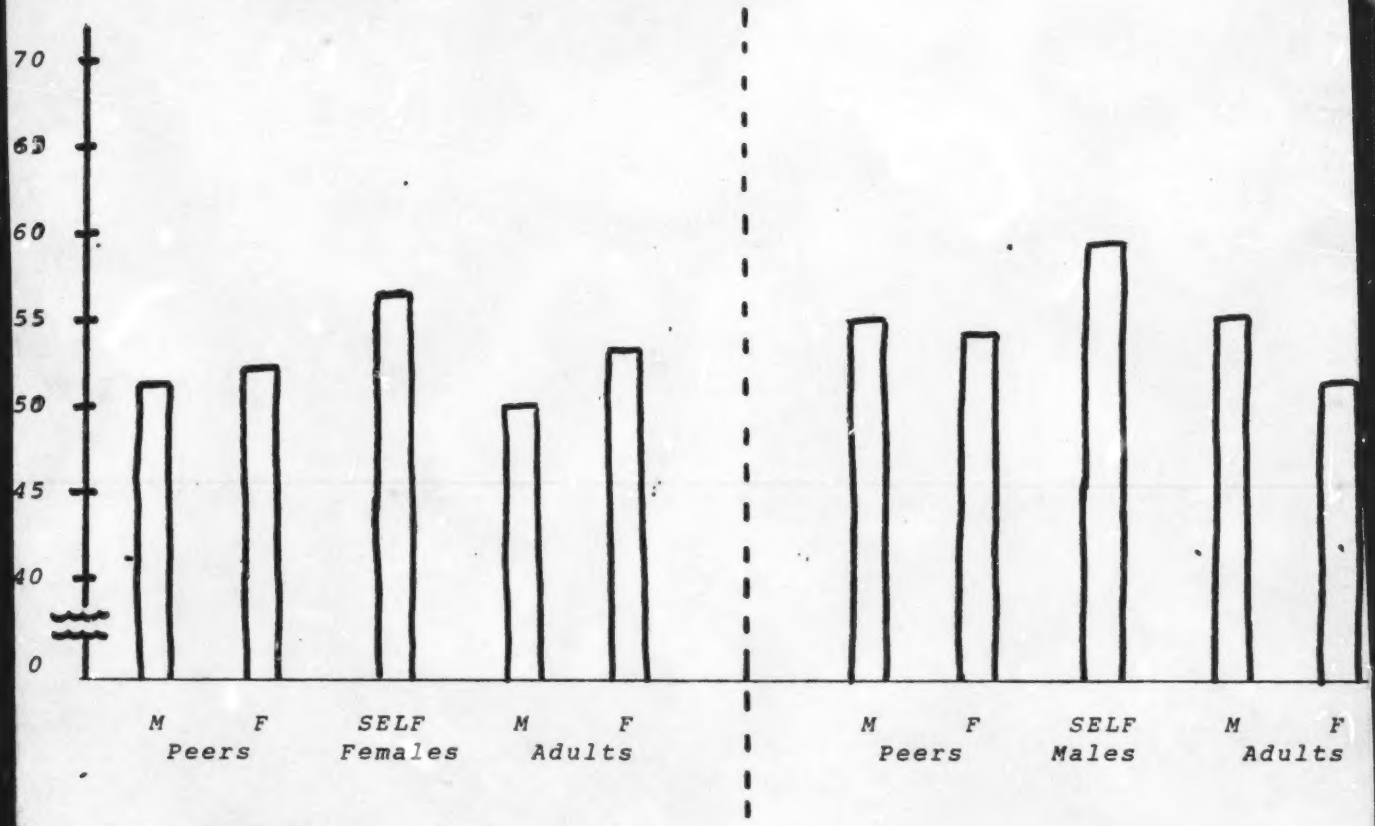
Relative Placement of Self-Raters and Ratings by Others



Ages of Self-Raters: 6-9

*Figure 2**

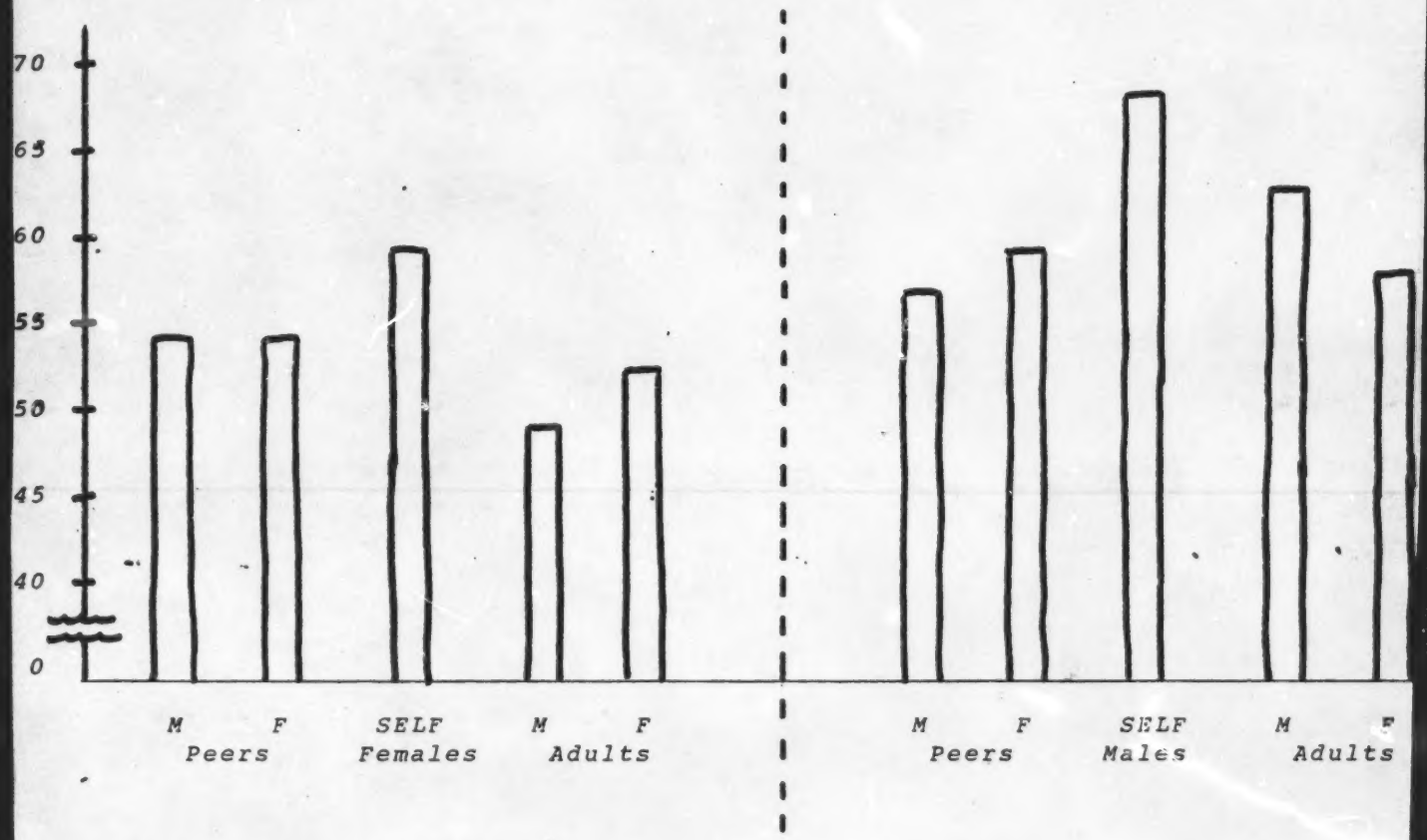
Relative Placement of Self-Raters and Ratings by Others



*Ages of Self-Raters: 10-14

*Figure 3**

Relative Placement of Self-Raters and Ratings by Others



**Ages of Self-Raters: 15-18*

THE SELF-PERCEPTION INVENTORY

General Information

The concept of self, like any concept, is an abstract idea generalized from particular instances. It comprises a system of perceptions which the organism formulates of the self in awareness of its distinctive existence. Since it is a construct which is inferred from behavior and which evolves from experience, this concept of self as perceived is measurable.

The behavior inferred and measured in the Self-Perception Inventory (SPI) is operationally defined by the individual responses concerning the perceptions of the self. The instrument is a forced-choice type of semantic differential containing four categories maintained along a continuum between two terms opposite in meaning. This format thereby provides both direction and intensity of response.

Description of the Inventory

There are three forms of the SPI:

(1) Self-Perception Inventory -- Student Forms (Respondents in grades 1 to 12): the self-ratings of 20 bipolar scales have four spaces of distance between the pairs of traits in sentence format. The inventory measures five components of perceptions of the self as a person; Self Concept, Ideal Concept, Reflected Self-Classmates, Reflected Self-Teachers, and Reflected Self-Parents. The forms are variants of the same traits with the sentences changed only to make them form-appropriate. For example, "I am strong" in the Self Concept form becomes "I wish I were strong" in the Ideal Concept form. There is also a Student Self (with 25 pairs of dichotomous traits) and a form called, "Perceptions of Others," which uses the same dimensions as the self-rated forms and is administered to those mentioned in the Reflected Self measures -- i.e., Classmates, Teachers, and Parents -- as well as to other people in a variety of roles. One distinct advantage of this latter form is the determining of the degree of closeness (or distance) between the self-ratings and the ratings of the individual by others.

(2) Self-Perception Inventory -- Adult Forms (High School students and Adults): The adult form of the SPI has a similar format except that it is longer -- 36 pairs of dichotomous traits -- and uses 72 adjectives instead of 40 sentences. Therefore, it is appropriate for older subjects and those who seem to have no language difficulty. It has the same five forms as the first five previously mentioned. Only the Student Self has not yet been developed in an adjective format. The Perception of Others form has been developed to correspond with the adjective self-rating forms of the SPI. A vocational self--to tap the organism's perceptions of self on the job--is presently being developed.

(3) Self-Perception Inventory -- Teacher Forms: The same semantic differential format is used, with the 36 pairs of adjectives relating to teachers, student teachers, their students, their cooperating teachers in the classrooms where they serve their internship, and their college supervisors. The specific measures are: (1) the student teacher's Self as a Teacher; (2) Reflected Self-Cooperating Teacher; (3) Reflected Self-Supervisor; (4) Ideal Teacher.

There are also three Teacher-Rating Inventory forms. One is designed to be filled out by the intern's own students. It can also be used by any student to rate any teacher. It has the same 36 pairs of traits, though in a sentence format. The other two teacher-rating forms are to be used with the college supervisor and the classroom cooperating teacher. One of these measures how the experienced teacher views the student teacher as a prospective instructor. The other measures how the experienced teacher thinks the intern will rate himself as a teacher.

I. Self Perception Inventory--Student Forms (10) SPI

Color Code	Letter Code		
pink	SC	(1)	Self-Concept--how the individual sees himself/herself as a person.
yellow	RS_c	(2)	Reflected Self-Classmates--how the individual thinks his/her classmates look at him/her as a person.
blue	RS_t	(3)	Reflected Self-Teachers--how the individual thinks his/her teachers look at him/her as a person.
green	RS_p	(4)	Reflected Self-Parents--how the individual thinks his/her parents look at him/her as a person.
white	IC	(5)	Ideal Concept--what kind of person the individual would like to be.
blue	O.P.-S/M	(6)	Perceptions of Others--Significant people in the individual's life rate him/her as a person on the same traits as those he/she uses to rate himself/herself. (Both male and female forms)
pink	O.P.-S/F	(7)	
orange	SC_s	(8)	Student Self--how the individual sees himself/herself as a student.
white	O.P.-s/r(M)	(9)	Perceptions of Others (Student Self)--how others see the individual as a student (both male and female forms).
white	O.P.-s/r(F)	(10)	

II. Self-Perception Inventory--Adult Forms (7) SPI *****

Color Code	Letter Code		
pink	SC	(1)	Self-Concept--how the individual sees himself/herself as a person.
yellow	RS_f	(2)	Reflected Self-Friends--how the individual thinks his/her friends look at him/her as a person.
blue	RS_t	(3)	Reflected Self-Teachers--how the individual thinks his/her teachers look at him/her as a person.
green	RS_p	(4)	Reflected Self-Parents--how the individual thinks his/her parents look at him/her as a person.
white	IC	(5)	Ideal Concept--what kind of person the individual would like to be.
green	OP-A/M	(6)	Perceptions of Others--Significant people in the individual's life rate him/her as a person on the same traits as those the individual uses to rate himself/herself (both male and female forms).
yellow	OP-A/F	(7)	

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III. Self-Perception Inventory--Teacher Forms (8) SPI +++++

Color Code	Letter Code		
green	SC_T	(1)	Self Concept-Teacher--how the individual sees himself/herself as a teacher.
pink	RS_{co}	(2)	Reflected Self-Cooperating Teacher--how the student teacher thinks his/her cooperating teacher in the classroom sees him/her as a teacher.
yellow	RS_{sup}	(3)	Reflected Self-Supervisor--how the student teacher thinks his/her college supervisor looks at him/her as a teacher.
blue	IC_T	(4)	Ideal Self-Teacher--what kind of teacher the intern would like to be.
white	TP	(5)	Teacher Perception--Cooperating teacher and college supervisor rate the intern as a teacher on the same traits as those he/she uses to rate himself/herself.
white	RTP	(6)	Reflected Teacher Perception--Cooperating teacher and college supervisor rate the intern as they think he/she rates himself/herself as a teacher.
white	SP/M	(7)	Student Perceptions--how the student perceives the teacher (male and female forms).
white	SP/F	(8)	

Scoring

Each of the SPI forms is scored the same way. With four spaces of distance between the two ends of the continuum, the "very" positive position receives a score of +2 when checked; the "more" positive position, a score of +1; "more" negative, -1; and "very" negative, -2. The algebraic sum of these individual dimension scores yields an index score for each measure of the self or for each measure of someone else.

Validity

Student Forms of the SPI: With Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory, a correlation of .68; multitrait-multimethod matrix indicates coefficients between .50 and .74.

Adult Forms of the SPI: With the MMPI, .72 for the Self Concept only; the other measures around .52.

Teacher Forms of the SPI: Concurrent/SC_T = .37
Predictive/SC_T = .38

Reliability

All forms on a test-retest basis (3-4 weeks) have been stabilizing around .88. Internal consistency for Self Concept is .94 and for Student Self is .79.

Example:

happy				unhappy
very happy	more happy than unhappy	more unhappy than happy	very unhappy	

Other Information Available:

1. standardized equivalents--stanines
2. profile chart/conversion table (form-relevant)
3. response set analysis
4. factor analyses
5. complete information in manuals

Translated Versions

Each of the three forms described above are available in these languages: SPANISH, ITALIAN, FRENCH.

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